

Message Text

SECRET

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45

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

EB-07 EA-06 /068 W

----- 123725

R 131305Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5321

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

SEOUL 95

S E C R E T SANAA 864

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, PINT, YE, KS, KN

SUBJECT: ROK-YAR RELATIONS

REF: SEOUL 2409; SANAA 693

1. SUMMARY. ROK AMBASSADOR UNABLE TO ACHIEVE ESTABLISHMENT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PDRY DESPITE OFFER TO BUY ROCK SALT AND DISCUSS ECONOMIC COOPERATION. NORTH KOREANS HARRASSED AMBASSADOR ON ARRIVAL AND THREE ARE TO BE EXPELLED APRIL 14. DPRK CAUSE BIZARRELY CHAMPIONED BY CONSERVATIVE PRO-SAUDI SHAIKY ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR IN OPPORTUNISTIC ATTEMPT THWART MODERATES PRESIDENT HAMDI AND FONMIN ASNAG. ASNAG TOLD AMBASSADOR APRIL 12 THAT, IN ABSENCE SPECIFIC AID PROMISE AND DUE ENBROILMENT OF KOREAN MATTER IN YARG INTERNAL POLITICS, HE WAS RELUCTANTLY UNABLE TO SUCCEED IN ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH ROK.

2. ROK AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA YOON VISITED SANAA FOR SECOND TIME APRIL 4 TO 11 IN ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN YARG AGREEMENT TO EXTEND MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. (FIRST ATTEMPT IN LATE 1974 DURING TIME OF LEFTIST-LEANING AYNI CABINET HAD BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL). YOON SAW FONMIN ASNAG TWICE AND DEPPRIMINS BARAKAT (INT AFF) AND GEGHMAN (FON & ECON AFF), ALL OF WHOM TOLD HIM THEY FAVORED ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS

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WITH ROK. PRESIDENT HAMDI ALSO COMMENTED TO ME APRIL 10 THAT

DECISION HAD BEEN MADE "IN PRINCIPLE" TO DO SO.

3. IN END, HOWEVER, YARG WAS UNABLE TO REACH DECISION TO ESTABLISH TIES BECAUSE MATTER BECAME INVOLVED IN POLITICAL INFIGHTING BETWEEN MODERATES LED BY PRESIDENT HAMDI AND FONMIN ASNAG AND CONSERVATIVES LED BY CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR. OSTENSIBLE REASON FOR INVOLVEMENT WAS DECISION BY ASNAG TO EXPEL TEN MEMBERS OF NORTH KOREAN MISSION WHO HAD GONE TO AIRPORT TO HARRASS AMBASSADOR YOON ON ARRIVAL AND HAD FOLLOWED

HIM TO HOTEL. NORTH KOREANS HAD SURROUNDED YOON AT AIRPORT, SHOUTED INSULTS, HAD HARRASSED HIM BY VEHICLE ON WAY TO HOTEL, AND SURROUNDED HIM AGAIN THERE WHERE THEY PUNCHED HIM IN ARM AND TRIED TO PULL ROK SECOND SECRETARY OUT OF BUILDING. SINCE ASNAG HAD REFUSED DPRK AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST TO DROP EXPULSION ORDER, WHICH HE NOTED ACIDLY BASED ON YARG SECURITY AUTHORITIES REPORT, NOT ON YOON'S COMPLAINT, NORTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR APPEALED FOR HELP TO AL-AHMAR WHO HAD VISITED NORTH KOREA IN 1973 AS HEAD OF PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION. AL-AHMAR, WHO PRESENTLY INVOLVED AS CONSERVATIVE LEADER IN BEHIND THE SCENES STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITH MODERATES, OPPORTUNISTICALLY SEIZED ON NORTH KOREAN CAUSE AS MEANS TO THWART HAMDI AND ASNAG. HE INTERVENED WITH POLITICALLY WEAK PRIMIN ABD AL-GHANI TO REDUCE NUMBER OF EXPELLEES FROM TEN TO SEVEN TO FOUR TO THREE. AL-AHMAR ALSO LET IT BE KNOWN THAT HE CONSIDERED DECISION TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS PREMATURE.

(WE UNDERSTAND AL-AHMAR NOW BEING CULTIVATED BY BOTH SOVIET AND IRAQI AMBASSADORS WHO CONSIDER THIS VAIN AND VENAL CONSERVATIVE AS BEST BET TO UNDERMINE MODERATE YARG)

4. ASNAG IN POST-MORTEM APRIL 10 TOLD ME THAT OPPOSITION OF AL-AHMAR HAD BEEN MAIN CAUSE FOR SHELIVING OF DECISION. ANOTHER FACTOR HAD BEEN FAILURE OF YOON TO BRING ANY SPECIFIC AID PROPOSALS, DESPITE ASNAG'S URGINGS TO DO SO. DURING MEETING WITH YOON IN JIDDA IN MARCH (MODERATES FELT THAT THEY MUST SHOW SOME SPECIFIC BENEFIT TO YAR TO JUSTIFY STEP IN FACE LOCAL OPPOSITION AND HEAVY PRC PRESSURE). MODERATES WERE NOT ALL THAT INTERESTED IN ROCK SALT PROPOSAL WHICH WAS PROPOSAL OF LEFTIST MINSTATE FOR FONAFF KHUDIR IN FORMER AYNI CABINET.

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5. IN CONVERSATION APRIL 9 WITH YOON (WHOM WE SAW ONCE OR TWICE DAILY DURING HIS VISIT), WE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT VISIBILITY OF AID PROPOSAL WAS CRUCIAL TO MODERATES, NOT ITS SIZE. PROPOSAL TO BUILD SOME KING OF FACILITY SUCH AS A SCHOOL, ETC. (I.E. A "MONUMENT") WOULD BE APPROPRIATE IF HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD AGREE, RATHER THAN A TEAM OF EXPERTS. YOON WHO RECEIVED "MOST SECRET" LETTER FROM ASNAG WELCOMING DISCUSSIONS ON SPECIFIC AID PROJECTS, SAID HE WOULD RAISE MATTER WITH SEOUL BUT

NOTED ROK NOT NORMALLY IN FOREIGN AID BUSINESS. HE WAS, HOWEVER,
REASONABLY PLEASED WITH CONTACTS ESTABLISHED DURING HIS VISIT
AND WOULD KEEP UP DIALOGUE WITH YARG.
SCOTES

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ESTABLISHMENT, TRADE, ECONOMIC COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SANAA00864
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750129-0205
From: SANAA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750455/aaaabyub.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 SEOUL 2409, 75 SANAA 693
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 JUL 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROK-YAR RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, PINT, YE, KS, KN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006